

THE FEAR OF DEATH

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A SERMON

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“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

[Another sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, upon verse fourteen, is #166, The Destroyer Destroyed]

and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

Hebrews 2:14-15

BEFORE speaking upon the main subject of the text, I cannot help drawing your attention to those two words “the children.” Hear that sweet expression again, for it is one of the choicest descriptions of the saints, “the children.” “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” What a wonderful influence the children have in the house! How many of the arrangements are made specially with a view to them! How much of the wear and tear of life to their parents is for their sakes! And we may truly say concerning our Father in heaven that His plans, His arrangements, His actions, His gifts are very emphatically for the children.

He uses all things in this great house of His for the education of the children, and when their education shall be finished, He will clear all these things away just as the builder takes down the scaffolding around the house when it is complete. This name of “the children” is such a blessed one, it seems to indicate a simple, sweet, and gracious character. “Be not children in understanding,” but in all else be—

*“Humble, teachable, and mild,
Like unto a little child.”*

I. But this is only by the by, the main theme on which I am going to speak is the fear of death. And first, I observe that THE FEAR OF DEATH IS NATURAL TO MAN AS A SINNER.

So long as there was no sin in the world, there was no death, and no fear of death, but as soon as sin entered, God said to Adam, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” The echo of those words still rings throughout the world, and Adam’s children, as sinners, fear death, and this is rather a blessing to them than otherwise.

To most unconverted men, the fear of death has often been made to subserve the highest purpose of divine mercy. Many a man must, at least outwardly, have been more guilty than he has been if the fear of death had not to some extent held him in check. The knell from the old church tower has often spoken to those who other preachers could not reach, and an open grave has had an eloquent voice which has been more alarming than the polished sentences of the golden mouthed orator. It is well that there should be such a thing as the fear of death in the world, but for it, sinners would be more outrageously wicked than they are already. This earth would soon become like Sodom and Gomorrah if men were not restrained by the fear that they must soon depart out of this life.

No doubt, too, the fear of death answers very wise and important purposes in the economy of humanity. If men were in peril, they would probably give themselves up without making any strenuous exertions for their preservation if there were not an indefinable dread of death, which creeps over them, and makes them put forth what strength they have in order, if possible, to prolong their lives. Being afraid to die, they tug, and toil, and labor, and strive, so as to put off the dreaded day as long as ever they

can. Even Satan spoke the truth when he said, “All that a man hath will he give for his life.” Our streets might be crowded with idlers who would starve rather than work if the fear of death did not drive them unwillingly to their labors.

Certainly, the fear of death has often been the means of preventing the crime of suicide. You know how Shakespeare represents Hamlet as talking of a man making his quietus with a bare bodkin—

*“But that the dread of something after death—
The undiscover’d country, from whose bourn
No traveler returns—puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have,
Than fly to others that we know not of.”*

No doubt it has often been the case that this “dread of something after death” has prevented men from rushing into the presence of their Maker red-handed with their own blood, and the fear of death, though itself part of the punishment of sin, is a wise and beneficent arrangement in the commonwealth of humanity.

II. But secondly, while the fear of death is natural to the sinner, IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO THE SAINT.

For all the purposes of which I have spoken, the fear of death is not needful to a Christian. He does not need it to restrain him from sin, for he hates sin with a perfect hatred. Other checks, of far greater importance here, in the hand of infinite love, restrain the Christian from going into sin. Nor does he need the fear or death to keep him from suicide, why should he have any desire to commit that terrible crime?

Christians have, even here, joy and peace through believing, and though their best portion is in the world to come, yet even now it may be said to them, “Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD?” The clanking fetters of the fear of death are not intended for God’s freemen to wear. Let the slave of sin and Satan wear them if they will restrain them from suicide and other evils, but the true born child of God needs no such check as this. He lives the life of faith upon the Son of God, and the love of Christ so graciously constrains him that it both holds him back from sin and urges him on to duty.

But though the fear death is not needful to Christians, and the grace of God has been manifested in giving Christ to deliver them from it, yet is it true that some of them are still subject to bondage through this wholly unnecessary fear. They not only fear death, but they fear it to such an extent that it brings them into bondage. It is not merely a dark cloud that passes over them and is soon gone, but it abides with them, they are “All their lifetime subject to bondage” through the fear of death. They shall not perish, neither shall any pluck them out of Christ’s hands, but they have not that restful assurance of safety which Christ’s sheep ought to enjoy.

I am sorry to say that I know some, who profess to have been Christians for years, but who still, at times at any rate, are in bondage through fear of death. I do not speak of this as a phenomenon, or an experience that is uncommon, I wish it were, but I am obliged to say that there are very many, whom one must judge to be the children of God, who are frequently, if not always, in a state of despondency, doubt, and dread through this fear of death which seems to rest upon them like a pall.

Many of these persons have been so long in this sad state that they have almost come to believe that it is impossible for them to escape from it. There is such a thing as sitting so long on the cold stone of despair that you and the stone almost seem to be one.

There is such a thing as wearing the yoke of despondency until that yoke and your shoulders become so closely united that you cannot take it off. Just as valor fights till its sword grows to its hand, so despair burdens you till it grows into your spirit. I would not roughly tear it out, but if I might kindly perform an act of spiritual surgery, I should be glad to be made the instrument through which the Master would perform His blessed work of delivering those who are in bondage through fear of death.

Beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, there is no need that you should be afraid to die, it is even possible for you to look upon death as your best friend. You may yet come to be familiar with the shroud, the mattock, and the grave, and find the cemetery to be no place of gloom, and may even rejoice in the prospect of death, and—

*“Long for evening to undress
That you may rest with God.”*

According to our text, it appears that, *in order to remove this fear of death from His people, our Lord Jesus Christ became man*, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same,” and as flesh and blood have about them the element of mortality, the flesh and blood of Christ partook of the same character. It is true that in Him was no sin, but in all other respects His flesh was like ours, and therefore was liable to death even as ours is. Now, the very fact that Jesus Christ became man should remove from us the fear of anything which is incidental to humanity because it was incidental to Christ as well as to ourselves.

*“He takes us through no darker rooms
Than He went through before.”*

“Fear not,” said Caesar, to the trembling boatman, “thou carriest Caesar and all his fortunes,” and in like manner, standing in the vessel of our mortality, Christ says to us, “Fear not, you carry Christ and all His fortunes, you are partakers of flesh and blood, and He also Himself likewise took part of the same.” If one had to be a soldier on the field of battle, it might be a very great assistance to one’s courage to stand side by side with the hero of a thousand fights who had always been victorious.

If you had to journey tonight along some dark and lonely road, and an angel came from heaven to walk beside you—and you were quite sure that it was an angel—I should think you would be altogether free from fear. With such a companion, you might even wish that the way were still more dangerous, so that you might have the delightful experience of passing through it unharmed under the care of such a glorious protector, but you have a better protector than any angel could be, even the Lord of the angels, your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, so what cause have you for fear? He will be with you all through life, He will be with you when you are called to die, and the pledge of that is that He is a partaker of that very flesh and blood which will bring you down to death.

But we not only know that Jesus partook of flesh and blood, we have this further comfort, *that Jesus did actually die*. The cross of Calvary was a witness to no phantom grief, no sham expiring. The Roman soldier with his spear pierced Christ’s side, and so proved the fact of His death. He went through the valley, He ascended the mountain on the other side, and He in due time went up into heaven, and all this He did as the Representative of His people. Whatever Christ did, He did for His whole church, and for each one who, believing in Him, is a member of that church. So, if you are a believer, you died in Christ, and you rise in Christ. As Christ died, you too must die, as Christ rose, you too must rise. What Christ has done, He has done for you in such a way that you also do it.

*“As Christ the Saviour rose,
So shall His followers must.”*

There is further cause for comfort in the fact that, *through death, Christ destroyed the devil*. Those persons who always interpret the word “destroy” as meaning “annihilate” would do me a very great favor if they could really prove to me that Jesus Christ annihilated the devil. I have very mournful proof in my own experience that he is not annihilated, and many of you also know that “your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”

Alas! the devil is still alive, but his power in this world has received its death-blow. Jesus Christ has trodden on the old serpent head, and to the Christian, in the matter of death, the devil is completely destroyed, for he that believeth in Christ shall never die.

Death seemed to be all black and evil, like Satan himself, something into which he had put his most venomous sting, but now, to believers in Jesus, death is a messenger from our Father in heaven calling us home to Him—not a black angel, striking terror to our hearts, but one who is exceeding bright and fair, coming to bid us fly away to realms of light and love. Remember, Christian, “the sting of death is sin,” but that has been destroyed for you, and “the strength of sin is the law,” but that has been fulfilled for you, rejoice, therefore, that both are gone so far as you are concerned, and thus your greatest causes for fear are entirely removed.

III. Now let us spend a few minutes in thinking of THOSE THINGS CONNECTED WITH DEATH WHICH USUALLY CAUSE DREAD. I borrow the list of them from a popular commentator.

There are some things connected with death which even the best of men naturally fear, and the first is *the death-pang*. It is generally supposed that there is exquisite pain associated with the act of death, but I am persuaded that this is a mistake, and that there is no pain whatever in dying, the pain is in living. The man who has along sickness previous to his departure must not lay at the door of death the pain he has to endure, for the pain appertains the living, not the dying. If life would but give way, death would inflict no pain.

The departure out of life is, one would judge, the cessation of pain, the ending of the strife. But if we take the popular view for granted, that death involves some extraordinary pain, then Jesus Christ partook of flesh and blood, and died, and destroyed the devil so far as we who believe in Him are concerned, in order that we might not have any fear of this pain.

He says to each one of us, “My child, whatever pain there may be about your death, I have endured it with an emphasis. I died, not as you probably will, on your bed, but upon a cross, instead of sympathizing friends around me, I had mocking foes; instead of soft pillows, I had cruel thorns and tearing nails; instead of cooling draughts and sustaining cordials, men gave me vinegar to drink mingled with gall; I died under far more trying circumstances than can possibly surround your death-bed, so now, my child, are you now willing to do at your Fathers’ bidding what I have done? The cup passed not from me, I drain it to be dregs, why then should it pass from you, or why should you wish it to pass from you?”

I have sometimes seen a mother, when her child has had medicine to take which it could not bear, sip of the cup, and then say, “Drink it, my child, it is for your good, and it is not so bad as you think, mother has tasted it herself,” and then the little one, not always with cheerfulness, but still with submission, drinks it up.” So Jesus brings us the cup, and says to each one, “Drink my child, I drank of this cup, so why shouldst thou fear to drink of it? There can be nothing deadly in it, for it has not destroyed me. It has been to me a gain, and it shall be a gain also to thee, for it shall take thee from thy humiliation to thy glory even as it took me.”

But to some others this may not be their particular phase of death that they dread. *They fear the darkness and gloom which sometimes attend departure out of this life.* There are different ways of taking down the earthly tenement. There are certain forms of disease which seem rather to increase the sufferer’s joy than to diminish it, while there are others which so affect the brain and the whole nervous system that depression is a melancholy symptom of the disease.

Some are constitutionally so nervous that they are afraid that, when they come face to face with death, they will be easily vanquished, but many of us must have noticed that the very people who are most depressed in anticipation of trouble are frequently those who bear it best when it does come. So it may be with you, my poor nervous friend. My observation warrants me in remarking that the most of Christians, when they die, are either in a deep calm or else triumphant in an ecstasy of delight.

But if it should not be so with you, if gloom surrounds your spirit, yet remember that Jesus Christ became a partaker of flesh and blood in order to deliver you from the dread of death. It is flesh and

blood that fear the gloom, it is flesh and blood that shrink from the despondency, and Jesus Christ passed through that experience when He said, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,” and later, when He cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” You cannot possibly have such gloom surrounding you as He had to pass through, He went down deeper than you will ever have to go, and you will always have His almighty arm to sustain you.

Besides, the remembrance that Christ suffered for you, that He has destroyed Satan’s power over you, and that He has opened the gates of resurrection and of glory for you, should take away from you all the gloom that you dread. You are making the mistake of looking at that part of death which belongs to this world, I pray that the Holy Spirit may anoint your eyes with heavenly eye-salve so that you may see that death is but the gate of life, the porch to paradise, and may no longer fear to enter the portals through which you shall pass into the presence of your Lord who went that way before you.

I know other believers, who do not so much dread the pain or the gloom as they do *the mystery associated with death*. The handwriting upon the wall troubled Belshazzar, not only because of the appearance of the fingers that wrote the message, but also because no one could interpret the writing until Daniel came, it was the mystery that terrified the impious monarch.

When travelling among the Alps in a dense mist, we have seemed to see vast lakes without a shore, crags that appeared like the battlement of heaven, and awful depths that thrilled us with horror. Yet much of that mystery was only caused by the mist, for when we journeyed the same way on a bright morning, the great lake proved to be only a little pond, the mighty battlement was a crag that a child could climb, and the vast depths that had made us shudder with terror were gentle slopes where we could have descended with ease.

So it is the mysteriousness of death that alarms you. That the soul should be divorced from the body to which it has been so long united is something that startles you. Yes, but as the light dissipates the terrors of the mountains, so the fact that Jesus Christ has brought life and immortality to light will scatter all your gloom. There is no “undiscover’d country” to you, Christian, for your Master has returned from the land of deathshade, and He has told you all you need to know concerning it. He has come back to tell you that, for you, there is no such thing as death, everything that constitutes death has been abrogated so far as you are concerned, and your portion is to be everlasting life. If you would only believe all that is revealed in the Word concerning believers in Jesus, the mystery associated with death would no longer alarm and terrify you.

There are some Christians who are *afraid of the grave*. I must say that I like the thought of sleeping in the cemetery, with green grass, and flowers, and shrubs growing all around, and winding walks upon the rising ground far away from the busy city—I say, I like the thought of all that—yet when I stand by an open grave, as I so often do, and see the cold clods of clay, and think of the chill and silence of the night, the cemetery appears in another light.

But after all, what does it matter where the poor body is laid? If it could lie in state, surrounded with light and music, you know that, very soon, even the chief mourner would have to say, “Bury my dead out of my sight.” When we think of those who are sleeping in Jesus—I speak, of course, only of their bodies—it does seem appropriate that they should be wrapped in their white robes, as men are when they go to their beds, and lovingly committed to the care of the mother-earth from which they sprang.

I do not think there is any need to trouble about all this, much of it is mere sentimentalism, and certainly, so far as Christians are concerned, when we recollect that the blessed body of Jesus was laid in the tomb, we are quite content in that matter to be even as He was.

I am afraid that I have not hit the center of the target even yet, for *some of “the children” are afraid of the judgement seat of God*. Does this remark surprise you? It ought to do so, for it ought to be impossible for a child of God to tremble at the thought of meeting his Father anywhere. Why is it that some are thus afraid. It is, beloved, because they have a dark suspicion that they are not really in Christ, not really saved, and this indicates a greater evil than the dread of death while it also point out the remedy for that evil. If I have the divine assurance that I am washed from every sin, and that, clothed in

the righteousness of Christ, I am without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, how can I give way to fear? It is the dreadful doubt, the peace-murdering doubt whether it is so, that causes the dread of death and of judgement, it is unbelief that is at the bottom of it.

If we would take such scriptures as these, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,” “By him all that believe are justified from all things,” “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” and if we really trusted in the Savior of whom they speak, we should have no fear of either death or judgement, but should cry, with the apostle, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”

No doubt, there are some professing Christians who ought to be afraid of death, there are some members of Christian churches who ought to dread the judgement seat, there are deacons and elders and ministers who ought to tremble at the thought of the world to come because their profession of Christianity is a mere profession, without any real work of the Spirit of God at the back of it.

When you have doubts about your eternal state, do not say that they come from the devil, it may be that the Spirit of God is striving with you to bring you to see the hollowness of all the religion in which you have put your confidence. Never be afraid of self-examination, but obey the apostolic injunction, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.” Better still, pray David’s prayer, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way ever-lasting.”

Those who have only a name to live, but who are spiritually dead, those who talk about believing, but who have not believed, those who talk about regeneration, but who have not been born again, have good cause to be afraid of death. If that be your condition, friend, I pray that you may become still more afraid of death, and that God’s gracious Spirit may make you afraid of sin, so that you may turn from it, and fly to Him who, by taking away your sin, shall also take away from you the fear of death.

But as for you, dearly beloved, who really are in Christ Jesus, you ought not to have any fear of death. There is no condemnation for you, for Christ has borne on your behalf all the punishment that was due to your sins. The sword of justice has no terrors for you, for it was plunged in the heart of Jesus on purpose that He might die in your place. You need not fear the possibility of being cast away from Christ, for you are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, and unless He were to dismember Himself, He could not cast away any who are thus vitally united to Him.

Let the thought that He became a partaker of flesh and blood, and died to put away your sin, and to destroy your great adversary the devil, be a quietus to all your fears of death. It may not be long before some of us will have our faith tested in our dying hour. The preacher may be called away or you may receive the summons first.

It would be well if we were all so familiar with death that we could say as one old saint did, “Dying? Why, I have dying daily for the last twenty years, so I am not afraid to die now,” or as another said, “I dip my foot in Jordan’s stream every morning before I take my breakfast, so I shall not be afraid to go down into the stream whenever my Lord bids me enter it.” May that be your experience and mine, beloved, and then we shall have no fear of death. I have told you before of that godly woman, who fell asleep in Jesus one night, and on her table were found these lines—

*Since Jesus is mine, I’ll not fear undressing,
But gladly put off this garment of clay;
To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to glory through death led the way.”*

May we all have like precious faith, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-32

Verses 1-2. *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.*

By which the apostle means, unless they had a false faith, a merely notional faith, or he may also mean “Unless what I have preached unto you should have been a fable, and therefore you will have exercised your faith upon nothing real, and so it would have been in vain.”

3. *For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received,—*

The preacher of Christ must not make new doctrines. He is not to be his own teacher, he is to receive the truth first, and then to deliver it. The Christian minister takes the lamp out of the hand of God, and then passes it on to the hands of His people. Think not that any originality is needed in the pulpit. All that is required is that the herald should faithfully deliver his Master’s message just as his Master gives it to him, “I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received,”

3-4. *How that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:*

There are many passages in the Old Testament which describe the Messiah as dying for sinners, especially the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah’s prophecy. There are others that speak of Him as being buried, yet not corrupting in the tomb. These were facts which the apostle had received upon the testimony of others, now comes the great fact of the resurrection—

5-8. *And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.* [See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 2663, “A Leap Year Sermon”].

The apostle does not attempt to defend the doctrine of the resurrection by any argument fetched from reason, but he proves it by undoubted evidence. If I had to prove that there existed such a tree as the cedar, I should not use logical arguments further than this—I produce a certain number of men who have seen a cedar, and the thing is proved by their testimony. If the evidence of honest men be not accepted, then there is an end, not only to Christianity, but to all the sciences, and you and I must wander for ever in a maze of doubts.

Now, of all the facts recorded in history, there is not one which is better attested than the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The men who testified that they had seen the risen Christ evidently had no selfish reason for doing so. What was the result of their testimony? They were cast into prison, they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, simply for believing the evidence of their own senses, and testifying what they knew to be true. It is clear that they would have had no interest in publishing this fact if it had not been true, their interest would have lain quite the other way. Besides, it was not as if only a few had seen Him, but over five hundred brethren at once beheld Him. For forty days He was gazed upon by different persons, and the fact is proved beyond all doubt.

9. *For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

“God has forgiven me,” said a good man once, “but I shall never forgive myself.” So was it with the apostle Paul, he knew that God had forgiven him, and honored him by making him an apostle, but he could not forgive himself, and no doubt the tears gushed from his eyes when he wrote these words, “I am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.”

10. *But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.* [See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 2833, “Lessons on Divine Grace”].

In what humble tones Paul speaks! He will not deny what grace has done in him and by him, but he will ascribe it all to grace. Brethren, you are not to shut your eyes to the gracious change which God’s

Holy Spirit has wrought in you. You may speak of it, and speak of it often, but always guard against taking any of the honor to yourselves, and be specially careful to put the crown upon the right head.

11-12. *Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed. Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?*

For Christ was the pattern man to all His people. He is their Representative. Whatever He did, He did for them, and whatever was wrought in Him shall be surely wrought in them, and if Christ rose from the dead, then all who are members of His mystical body must rise too, for when the Head comes out of the grave, you cannot retain the members in it. Prove that Christ rose, and you prove that His people rise, for they are one with Him.

13. *But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:* [See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 2287, "If there be no Resurrection"].

Yet it is proved by hundreds of credible witnesses that Christ is risen, therefore there is a resurrection.

14. *And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.*

This truth is the key-stone of the arch, put this away, and the whole tumbles down. It is upon this that the whole Christian system rests. If the resurrection of Christ be a mere myth, and not a positive matter of fact, preaching and faith are equally vain.

15. *Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.*

The apostle puts the matter strongly, yet not too strongly. He seems to say, "You know me to be an honest and truthful man, having no selfish motive in what I declare unto you, but if Christ did not rise from the dead, I have testified to you a gross falsehood, and led you to put your trust in an imposture." So he stakes his own personal character upon the fact of Christ resurrection.

16-17. *For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.*

Yet they knew that they were not in their sins, for they had the witness within them that their sins had been pardoned. They knew that sin had no more dominion over them, for they had been made to walk in holiness before the Lord. "Therefore," says Paul, "Christ must have risen, for if he had not risen you would have remained sinners as you once were."

18. *Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.*

A supposition against which both nature and grace revolt.

19-20. *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.*

As they always brought into the Jewish tabernacle and temple a portion of the harvest, which indicated that the harvest was begun, so Christ's going up to heaven was the taking of the first sheaf into God's great garner, and all the rest must follow.

21-22. *For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

Not that all shall be saved, but all will be raised from the dead. Or else the passage means that, as all who were in the first Adam died as the result of Adam's sin, so all who are in the second Adam, that is, Christ, shall live as the result of his righteousness. The question is, Are we in the second Adam? Faith is that which unites us to Christ. If we are trusting in him by a living faith, then his rising from the dead secures our rising from the dead, and if not, it is true that we shall rise, but it will be to shame and everlasting contempt.

23-28. *But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put*

all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

This is a very difficult passage, but I suppose the meaning is just this. Jesus Christ, in order to remedy the great mischief of sin, was appointed to a mediatorial kingdom over all worlds, and that kingdom will continue until all His enemies shall be destroyed, and sin shall be trodden under His feet. Then Christ—as mediator, mark you, not as Lord—shall deliver up His mediatorial kingdom to His Father, and there shall be heard that great shout, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!” Christ as God, as one of the persons of the ever-blessed Trinity, will still be as glorious as ever, but His mediatorial reign will then be over, seeing that He hath accomplished all its purposes.

29. *Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?*

This is another most difficult passage, and many meanings have been given to it, but I think the most likely to be correct is this, As soon as a member of the early Christian church was given up to the lions, or to be burned, another convert would step forward, and say, “Let me take his name and place.” Though it was almost certain that they also would soon be put to death, there were always found persons bold enough to come forward to be baptized, to take the place of the dead. “Now,” says the apostle, “what advantage is there in this heroism if the dead rise not?”

30. *And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?*

Why were the apostles always subjecting themselves to cruel persecution?

31. *I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.* [See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 828, “Dying Daily”].

He was so hunted about everywhere that there was not a day in which he felt secure of his life, so he asks, “Why should I endure this if there be no world to come?”

32. *If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?*

It is quite possible that Paul was thrown to the lions in the theatre at Ephesus, and that he fought with them, and came off a conqueror. “But why,” says he, “did I try to save my life for future labor and for future suffering if the dead rise not?”

32. *Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die.*

This is the best philosophy in the world if there is no life to come. So Paul has proved his point right well by every argument that he has used.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.